

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. FENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER V. A STORY OF FAMILY POLICY.

STARTLED, vexed, almost frightened at the possibility of the object of her mission being suspected, not at the fact of being found alone with Mr. Boldero in his orchard, Jenifer gave but a cold response to the hilarious greeting of Mrs. Jervoise and Effie.

"You are seldom out of bed at eleven o'clock in the morning, either of you," she said, releasing Mr. Boldero's hands as she spoke, and getting nearer to the holly-hedge which divided her from the pony-carriage and its occupants. "How could I think that for once you wished for an early morning drive?"

"If you had thought it would you have asked us to come with you?" Mrs. Jervoise asked with her most superior satirical smile.

"No, indeed, I wouldn't," Jenifer said bluntly. "I wanted to speak to Mr. Boldero alone."

"Mr. Boldero—Effie, introduce me, please—is indeed a fortunate man to be sought early in the morning in this way by a young Diana; but how fortunate that we caught a glimpse of you over the hedge, for now I'm sure Mr. Boldero is going to ask us in to inspect his art-treasures, of which I've heard so much from my brother-in-law, Hubert Ray."

Mrs. Jervoise spoke to him in her sweetest tones, and smiled upon him with her sweetest smile. But he was not beguiled by either into forgetting that the time was over which he could give to pleasure this morning.

"You come too late, Mrs. Ray," he said, addressing himself to Effie instead of to her sister, who had spoken to him; "if

you had been as active and early as Miss Ray you would have found me among those art-treasures of which you speak so flatteringly, and I would have shown them to you. As it is, I shall be late for a business appointment, unless I wish you all good-morning and ride into Exeter at once."

He raised his hat to the two ladies on the other side of the hedge, and held his hand out cordially to Jenifer.

"You have disappointed me," she said impulsively.

"I know it, I grieve about it, but I can't help it," he said in a low tone which baffled two pairs of eager ears. Then he went away, not even telling Jenifer that one day she would be bound to forgive him for this seeming lukewarmness about her brother Jack, though he longed with strong longing to do so.

"Well, Jenifer," Mrs. Ray began, when Jenifer presently, mounted on her mare Witchcraft, came out into the road, and fell into position by the side of the pony-carriage; "well, Jenifer, for a bold action that in a London girl would be called unpardonable audacity, commend me to the modest village violet! What private business could you have had with this grave and rather repellent man of law, that could justify such a step as coming by yourself to call upon him?"

"My business quite justified the step, Effie," Jenifer said carelessly. It was a relief to her that her sister-in-law should rather impute lightness of conduct to her than that she should suspect the deep anxiety, the well-grounded fears which had brought her over to consult her father's trusted friend, who had refused to be consulted.

"Jenifer dear, you surely didn't take what I said seriously, did you?" said Mrs.

Ray, smiling beamingly till all her glistening little white teeth displayed themselves. "Why of course there's nothing in your coming over to talk to the family lawyer; the family lawyer has so much in his power, hasn't he, Flora?"

"How should I know, never having heard of him before to-day?" said Mrs. Jervoise, for she felt her sister's insinuations to be indiscreet.

"I thought I heard you say that Hubert had talked to you so much about Mr. Boldero's art-treasures," Jenifer put in with downright direct truthfulness.

"So I did, Miss Conscience, who is so ready to smite me. Hubert has spoken to me of the lawyer's pictures and bronzes; never of the lawyer himself."

"I am surprised at that. Hubert thinks so much more of Mr. Boldero than of what Mr. Boldero possesses," Jenifer said thoughtfully; and then, having by this time had quite enough of Mrs. Ray's conversation, she let Witchcraft go, and drew a long breath of relief when she found that the pony-carriage was far behind her.

"Failed, failed in the quarter where I looked for certain help," the girl said to herself as she went along. "Oh, Jack! poor boy, what can I do for you now? Hubert has drunk in his wife's opinions till they have intoxicated him; mother can't, or rather shan't, if I can help it, know what makes me want to get Jack away from Hillingsmoor; and Jack himself is only too ready to stay where he can hunt, and shoot, and fish, and idle, and—— Poor Jack!"

The ladies had quite a vivacious little party that night at Moor Royal. For Mr. Ray and Jack were two of the three gentlemen who were dining with Mr. Boldero, and Mr. Jervoise slept so peacefully that he was not counted or considered at all.

Christmas was close upon them now, and Mrs. Ray and her sister were busy devising various schemes for combining philanthropy with pleasure. They had got the vicar's consent to train a chosen few of the village girls to act in a pretty little operetta for the good of the choir-fund. And they had arranged a number of tableaux vivants in which they and Hubert were to take part only. Jenifer had not been asked to aid them. They thought her too pretty for their purpose, and pretended to think that her grief for her father was too new for her to do more than watch their bright doings like any other guest.

Old Mrs. Ray and Jenifer listened with sympathetic interest to all the bright, clever suggestions which the enterprising sisters made to one another. They carried their audience with them invariably, this pair, whether they were acting in public or in private only. And to-night Jenifer found herself helping to run up æsthetic calico dresses for the girls who were to take part in the operetta, with all her heart.

In fact she had entirely dismissed the chagrined feeling of the morning, and under the influence of a new excitement she was allowing some of her doleful forebodings about her brother Jack to recede into the background.

Presently Mrs. Jervoise said:

"Effie, we colourless yellow-haired women can't do everything. I want a Nell Gwynn to pose with Captain Edgecumbe's Charles the Second. Find a bonny brunette for me."

"Devonshire women are lovely, as a rule," old Mrs. Ray put in; "brighter eyes, clearer complexions, more luxuriant hair I have never seen anywhere than in this district."

"Mrs. Ray, you're the very friend we're in need of," Mrs. Jervoise cried, going up very gracefully and graciously to the widow's chair; "find us a brunette beauty such as you describe. I feel sure you can lay your hands upon a dozen."

"The girl I am thinking of is not a lady, but she's a good, sensible girl—a very good girl, I'm sure, and she'll not suffer her head to be turned by flattery," old Mrs. Ray said, drawing herself up; "it's Minnie Thurtle, our gamekeeper's daughter, whom I mean——"

"Oh, mother," Jenifer interrupted hastily, with ill-concealed vexation, "don't suggest taking a girl like Minnie so utterly out of her place."

"Why not? we could put her back in her place easily enough when we had done with her," Mrs. Jervoise said, laughing. Then in defiant disregard of a few words of expostulation and reprobation from Jenifer, the two sisters went on planning how they would set about securing old Thurtle's consent to his daughter's acting with the gentry.

"What is she like, Jenifer?" young Mrs. Ray asked. "I ought to have been shown all the beauties on my husband's estate."

"She has fine dark eyes, a good figure, and a bold expression. Minnie Thurtle is no favourite of mine," Jenifer said impatiently; "if you get her up here to amuse

your guests she will be fancying herself one of them, and may give you trouble, Effie."

"If she forgets how to behave I'll very quickly freshen up her memory; but I'm not a bit afraid. From what you say she has the very face for Nell Gwynn. We'll go and see her to-morrow, Flora. By the way, where does Thurtle live?"

"In a cottage close to the home farm-house."

"Does he? I know it then. Jack pointed out the cottage to me the other day—such a pretty one, Flora; a perfect little bower it must be in summer, all covered with honeysuckle and roses. Jack says he shall turn it into his bailiff's house when he settles at the home-farm."

"Jack will have to be his own bailiff," his mother said seriously. "The home-farm must cease to be a toy to him now, if he wants to make a living out of it."

Jenifer could bear it no longer.

"You're all of you cruelly kind in wishing Jack to be at the home-farm. We shall all bitterly regret his taking it."

"You're not at all anxious to keep your brother near you, Miss Ray," Mrs. Jervoise said, throwing back her head, and striving to make Jenifer understand how insignificant she was, and how little her opinions were regarded.

"Not under such conditions; but what I have to say about it I will say to Hubert and Jack."

"Don't delude yourself with the idea that you can induce Hubert to alter any opinion I have taught him to form," Effie cried with aggravating assurance. "It's the best thing possible for Jack that he should remain down here near us all; he has been brought up in the country, and knows nothing of a London life. If he were cast adrift in London without Hubert to look after him he would probably come to grief."

Jenifer got up when her sister-in-law ceased speaking, and walked over to the piano. She had not been playing at all since the death of her father and the home-coming of the bride, and both Effie and Mrs. Jervoise looked at her with as much astonishment as admiration, when she had played a few bars in a masterly manner.

"Why, Jenifer, you play deliciously," Effie cried frankly; "if I could play like that I'd give lessons and be quite independent of everyone, wouldn't you, Flora?"

"Rather!" Mrs. Jervoise promptly responded. "Why, Miss Ray, if you were

to go to London, where you are so anxious to send your brother Jack, you would soon make a fortune, by playing at concerts and that sort of thing."

Jenifer bit her lips and constrained herself not to speak. It was coming then, the attempt that she had foreseen would be made to oust her out of her old home.

But though she kept silence and the peace, her mother was not able to follow her example.

"It would break my heart to think that my daughter had to go out into the cold world to work for her daily bread," old Mrs. Ray said with unwise, heartfelt, passionate feeling.

"Calling the world cold is a mere phrase, Mrs. Ray," Effie said incisively. "I always think it such nonsense to call the world names such as 'cold' and 'hard' and 'cruel' if one doesn't happen to be as well off as one wishes to be. I never found the world anything but very pleasant; did you, Flora?"

"It's quite good enough for me," Mrs. Jervoise said, walking up to the fire, her hands, sparkling with diamonds, clasped over her golden head.

"You have been two very fortunate young ladies," old Mrs. Ray said with gentle bitterness.

"Oh, I don't know about that," Effie said judicially, "only we always make the best of things, and get as much pleasure as we can out of everything; don't we, Flora? Why, some girls coming down as I did straight away from all the balls and theatricals and hunting that I'd been having at Flora's country place, would have moped themselves to death."

"That they would," Mrs. Jervoise agreed; "but we're neither of us great at making a moan. Miss Ray, why have you stopped playing?"

"Effie and you were speaking so loud that I had to bang in order to hear myself," Jenifer said good-temperedly. Then she added: "Besides, I got interested in listening to your happy philosophy."

At this moment Mr. Jervoise woke himself up with a start. He looked at his wife curiously for a few moments, as she stood in all the glory of her rich lace and jewels full in the blaze of lamp and fire-light. Then he said peevishly:

"You wear too much jewellery, Flora; there's no rest for the eye in looking at you; you're too bright, my dear, too bright; you shine too much, you lack repose."

"I shall think you lack common-sense,

to say nothing of courtesy, if you go on in that strain," Flora said carelessly.

"Don't fidget about in that maddening manner," he said more peevishly still; "you wear too many di'mons—you lack pos—you—"

His words ceased to flow, his head fell on one side, and his mouth remained open. Flora flew to the bell, which she rang liberally but without excited violence.

"Send for the best doctor in Exeter at once," she said collectedly, "and tell the messenger to say that Mr. Jervoise has a stroke of paralysis, and that it has been expected for some time. The doctor will have time to think of treatment as he comes over, if he knows a few facts beforehand."

"How wonderfully you keep your head, Flora," Effie said admiringly. And Mrs. Jervoise lifted her shoulders lightly in acknowledgment of a compliment which she felt to be well-deserved.

Then between them they superintended the removal of the stricken man to his own chamber, over the arrangements of which Mrs. Jervoise presided indefatigably for several days.

She really was unwearied in her attention to her suffering husband, and only allowed herself a little relief from the depressing atmosphere and influence of the sick-room, when her sister could take her place. But at the time she showed no sign of anxiety; nervousness and fatigue appeared to be unknown, and never a cloud dimmed the brightness of her fair face, nor a thrill of alarm for the sufferer rendered the clear metallic voice tremulous.

"Your sister bears up in a wonderful way," old Mrs. Ray said to her daughter-in-law about a fortnight after the paralytic stroke had fallen on Mr. Jervoise.

"Oh, Flora and I never feel tired or give up when there's anything to do," Effie answered gaily; "we look slight and delicate, but in reality we can do twice as much as most big robust-looking women."

"I wish Mrs. Jervoise would let me or Jenifer lighten her labours," old Mrs. Ray said earnestly. Her best sympathies were aroused by the sight of the unflagging zeal with which the pretty young wife devoted herself to her helpless husband.

"Oh, thanks, but Flora isn't a bit tired, and Mr. Jervoise likes to see her about the room; and do you know she has got on with those character-costumes twice as fast as if Mr. Jervoise had kept well, and things had gone on as usual? Flora's cleverer with her needle than I am, and

she has such perfect taste. You'll be surprised when you see the Marie Stuart and Nell Gwynn costumes, and you'll hardly know Minnie Thurtle in hers."

"Do you still mean to have your dramatic entertainment, Effie?" Jenifer asked.

"Yes, Jenifer; the invitations are out, and we mean to make it a great success. Mr. Jervoise will be able to sit up and be moved into his dressing-room by that time, so that there will be nothing in Flora's leaving him for a few hours in the evening. You know he can always amuse himself with sleeping in the evening."

"Have you spoken to Thurtle about his daughter acting yet?" Jenifer asked eagerly.

"Oh yes, and had her here two or three times, and drilled her into doing her part very fairly," Effie cried triumphantly.

It was with difficulty that Jenifer repressed an exclamation of pain and dread.

THE SOLDIER AT HOME.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THOMAS ATKINS is a youth who has given a good deal of trouble to his friends—with all the goodwill on his part to save them any trouble at all—simply because he is of a tough and elastic composition, which refuses to be squeezed into any of the holes, round or square, that happen to be open to him upon the shuffle-board of life. He is not at all an ill-conditioned or sulky young fellow; his faults are all the other way. If life were all beer and skittles, Tom would rise to a distinguished position and become the ruler of men, for at skittles or anything else that can be done by manual skill or dexterity Tom is clever enough. He is by no means idle with his hands, it is his head that he cannot be got to use. All the doings of men of science and so on from Galileo upwards or downwards he regards with polite indifference; but he has a real worship for a "best on record," and regards the champions of the oar and the racing-path with a veneration he accords to no other dignitaries, whether of Church or State. Tom would make an excellent "squire of the parish," but, as such positions are not bestowed on the most worthy, he stands a fair chance of sinking down to something very like the pauper of the parish. So that coming to an old friend during one of his periodic slides in the direction of the latter, the conscientious advice was given

him, "Go for a soldier." "I will," said Tom, and forthwith disappeared.

Remorse was at first the lot of his adviser. For Tom has a sister, with the same handsome face as her brother, but with a force of character that would, had Tom possessed it, have landed him Lord Mayor of London at least. In her case it brought her, combined with the handsome face, a rich husband and a nice house in Bayswater. Now the immediate result of Tom's going and enlisting was, that Mrs. Creaker, his sister, drove at once to the barracks, whence Tom had written a pathetic farewell, and paying down the sum of ten pounds smart money—at which moderate tariff for the first three months after enlistment the recruit is let off his bargain—carried him off triumphantly in her brougham.

"If she had only forked out the ten pounds before I'd joined," said Tom ruefully.

But it is doubtful whether Mr. Creaker would have drawn that cheque, just for Tom's benefit. Perhaps it was not Tom's future career he was concerned about, so much as the family position. To think of Tom coming to see his relations in a scarlet shell with a cane and a small cap set jauntily on the side of his head, for all the world like one of Mary the housemaid's admirers—oh, it would be too much to bear!

Tom himself may have had something to bear, and likely enough found the comfortable house in Bayswater anything but a bower of roses. Anyhow, one morning came an agitated note from Mrs. Creaker.

"T. has disappeared, I fear to enlist again. C. will never pay another penny for him. But try and save him."

A pleasant, lively scene this fine spring morning, the neighbourhood of Trafalgar Square, where the great world has just opened its eyes and begun to stir, a sunny haze over Whitehall, and the omnibuses and cabs quite transfigured in the brightness of it; the padded old generals ambling to their clubs; ministers and M.Ps. hurrying to their offices or their committees; artists making for their easels, and millionaires for the money-market; a pleasant scene with the dignified buildings, and columns, and porticoes; but a little out of keeping with a forlorn band of young fellows gathered near the steps of the National Gallery. Peaked and hungry-looking are these young fellows, and rather shabby as to garments; with red comforters making

the most of themselves as chest-protectors; with coats buttoned as tightly as a scarcity of buttons permits; with dilapidated pantaloons, and woeful boots.

Every now and then a scarlet jacket appears upon the scene, and a stout and rosy sergeant looks critically over the little squad, and even enters condescendingly into conversation; while the young fellows, pale and nervous-looking in prospect of the ordeal before them—they are not recruits yet, but only aspirants for the position—brisk up and assume as best they can an air of ease and nonchalance.

Among this band we might expect to see the familiar form of Tom; but he is not here. He must have chosen some other avenue for entrance to the British Army. Perhaps he has gone to some district post-office, and posted himself to a distant battalion, or joined at some local centre.

These local centres, by the way—the brigade dépôts of the new system of linked battalions—hardly do what was expected of them in the way of furnishing local recruits—the sturdy country youth who are wanted hang back a good deal. If these enlist at all, they often have reasons of their own for leaving the neighbourhood where they are known; and then old soldiers say there is something very discouraging about the entourage of a dépôt, with its crusty sergeants, no military display to stir the imagination, and nothing but everlasting recruit-drill going on. The large towns and their recruiting agencies still furnish the bulk of new enlistments; and this especial one of West London sends perhaps the largest contingent of all. For this is no exceptional muster we are told, the same number of recruits come up day after day in an unceasing if not very powerful stream.

By this the little group has marched off between the iron rails where placards hang, calling the attention of young men to the advantages of the army in general, and of the Royal Bombardiers in particular, or whatever may be the corps in want of recruits, and under the archway into the barrack-yard.

At the entrance to the barrack-yard a little crowd has gathered, seemingly friends and acquaintances of the recruits, who gradually edge forward in their eagerness to get a view of them till the sentry on duty pushes them back. And there in front of the dun-coloured barrack buildings, A, B, and C, are drawn up in line the squad of recruits, while more stout, well-fed sergeants

come up and look them over. A soldier's wife overhead tranquilly arranges a pot of mignonette, and hangs out a bird-cage in the sunshine—the sunshine that streams across the barrack-yard, in the full blaze of which a party of Guardsmen, in white fatigue-jackets, are going through a bit of punishment-drill, marching here and there, now threatening to go right through the barrack wall, or again to transfix themselves upon the iron railing, but pulled up always at the right moment by the word of command, as if the sergeant had a string to them and pulled them hither and thither, like an Italian boy with his white mice.

The crowd at the gate, however, have no eye except for their friends, the recruits. There is a general cry: "That's him; that's the bloke as 'll nail 'em!" as a military surgeon in plain clothes marches in at the barrack-door. Then the sergeant straightens up the little band, and dresses the line, while some of the lads—the most eccentric in the way of apparel—cut capers and indulge in grimaces expressive of intense enjoyment of such a happy farce. A few more have joined the line, one with a decent great-coat and muffler about his neck, who might be a City clerk, very pale and anxious looking; and another, a fine strapping young fellow, whose set and resolute face would become the leader of a forlorn hope—and that! yes; surely that is Tom himself.

And so Tom marches in with the rest of the awkward squad, marches before the surgeon provided only with the free kit that Nature gave him on his entrance into the world. He is measured by the standard that resembles an enlarged copy of the machine that shoemakers use to take the length of their customers' feet. Tom is five feet ten inches and a half, and will do for the foot-guards or heavy cavalry—if he chooses to go for them—while the little fellow who follows him barely passes the five feet four inches which is the minimum standard for anything. Then Tom is told to count ten while the tape is run round his chest. He counts slowly enough, and with an accent of contempt in his voice, as if there could be any possible doubt of that well-developed chest of his being under the mark. But some of the slips of fellows manage to count ten and yet keep their chests full of wind; after the manner of Boreas outside, who seems to go on blowing for ever without exhausting the supply; and so just save their thirty-four inches. Some of the

younger ones fail to pass at all, and are sent back to complete their growth. All, without exception, give the age of nineteen years or a little over, though many of them are perhaps a year or two younger. But no proof is required as to age, only the physical equivalent of nineteen years is required in a recruit, and many a stout, forward young fellow of seventeen would pass for nineteen, where a weedy youth, who had really attained that age, might be sent back.

Then there is the test of weight; the recruit must scale at least one hundred and twenty pounds. Tom has at least a couple of stone to spare. There is no question about his being a likely recruit. The only doubtful point now is as to Tom's sister. Will she come down upon him again and insist on buying him out? The matter is discussed quite dispassionately by the recruiting-sergeants. As far as they are concerned, so much the better for them if Tom is bought out every other day and enlists in the intervals. Already has Tom's especial sergeant made two pounds by the transaction, as he is paid a pound for each recruit who passes the medical examination. Out of this he has generally to pay ten shillings to the bringer-in, or unofficial tout who secures the recruit, but in this case Tom has brought himself, and gets nothing—no, not even the Queen's shilling that formerly everyone got who 'listed for the army, whether accepted or rejected; and all that dramatic business of slipping the shilling into the hand of the half-reluctant and half-inebriated recruit has come to an end. Recruiting is now conducted on temperance principles; each man has a little pamphlet put into his hand, almost like a tract. Tom has been studying this pamphlet attentively while sitting in the bare barrack-room waiting for further orders.

It is well that Tom is prepared, for presently he is sent for, and there in the corridor is his sister with her husband, the latter looking very chilly and uncomfortable.

Mrs. Creaker falls upon her brother's neck and weeps.

"Dear Tom," she sobs, "Edward will give you another chance. I have got the ten pounds, and you must give me your word of honour that you'll never, never do it any more."

But Tom holds firm.

"Look here, Lucy," he says in a husky voice; "you mean it well, perhaps, but you shouldn't try to drag me from a thing I'm cut out for."

"We are not going to drag you, Tom," interposed Mr. Creaker authoritatively; "only we expect you to listen to reason. Now, tell us, in the first place, what are the terms of this absurd enlistment?"

"For seven years," said Tom readily, "or eight if the time of service expires when abroad."

"Exactly," replied Creaker. "The best years of your life; the years when you ought to be making a position for yourself in the world and laying the foundation of future competency. And at the end of this precious seven or eight years—there you are, cast aside like an old shoe."

"Not a bit of it," said Tom. "The soldier, when he leaves the colours, has five years, or four, as the case may be, in the reserve, for which time he gets sixpence a day for doing nothing."

"With a liability," adds Creaker, "to be called out at any time when he's wanted—when, if he should have had the luck to find a decent situation, he is sure to lose it. And at the end of your twelve years, Tom, where will you be? A candidate for the workhouse."

"Not a bit," answered Tom calmly. "I don't mean to leave the army for that. What I've been telling you about is the look-out of an illiterate man who doesn't care for anything better. And it isn't so bad for him. He draws his twenty or perhaps thirty pounds of reserved pay when he leaves his regiment, and so, with his sixpence a day, he can set himself up in a little business if he likes. But as I can read and write and cypher, I shall be a sergeant, I'm told, before many years are over, and then I can stay on for my twenty-one years and a pension."

"A sergeant!" cried Creaker, turning to his wife. "Just fancy—a relative of mine with those horrid stripes on his arm!"

"I promise you this," cried Tom bitterly: "I'll never come to your house to make you ashamed of me, anyhow."

"Oh, Tom, we shall never be ashamed of you!" said his sister, beginning to sob again.

But Creaker shook his head solemnly. As Tom was so obdurate, he must be left to his fate. For his own part, he should consider him as civilly dead.

Tom looked a little awestruck at this phrase, not knowing exactly what it meant; but anyhow he was not to be shaken in his purpose, and so his friends took their departure, leaving him a little sore at heart, but quite determined to make the best of his way as a soldier laddie.

Of course Tom's sudden disappearance from the society of which he had been an ornament caused a good deal of speculation. People wanted to know where that nice young fellow had gone, and the young women—those Dashwood girls especially—with whom he had waltzed and played tennis, and generally made himself useful, were full of curiosity as to his fate. And at first the Creakers enveloped the matter in gloom and mystery.

Tom kept up a correspondence with an old friend, who continued to keep Mrs. Creaker informed of his doings. On the whole he had no reason to complain of his treatment. He had soon passed his drills and joined the ranks, and now he had plenty of time to himself, and smoked and read the newspaper like any swell with six thousand a year. At first he had found the atmosphere of the barrack-room rather sulphurous. The army that swore horribly in Flanders has gone on swearing rather more than less ever since. And in this respect the army reorganised is about on a par with the old establishment, except perhaps that there is rather a wearisome sameness and reiteration of profanity about the young soldiers. After all, Tom had come to the conclusion that all this was but an echo of the tone of the workshop and public-houses in civil life, and sprang more from a paucity of ideas and a yearning for forcible expression with a limited vocabulary than from any particular inherent depravity. And taking them individually, the soldiers were not at all bad fellows, and would talk sensibly enough; each man with his own history to himself, and some kind of plan for the future, generally blown to the winds at the first chance of a big drink. And as for that, after a dusty march out with a pack on your back and a heavy rifle in your fist, a can of beer at the canteen, very good and cheap, was something of a luxury. They had all plenty of money to spend, perhaps rather too much—four shillings a week on an average, clear of everything, which could be made ducks and drakes of at the canteen, or worse still, in the grogshops of the town.

But as for social disadvantages, that the private soldier may have to put up with, Tom averred that he had not felt them as yet. Of course if he went into the town it was rather annoying to find that the red coat shut him out of most places of resort of the better class—to find that the soldier was welcomed only in low public-houses

and entertainments of the penny gaff style. But then he found sufficient amusement without going out of bounds. There was the gymnasium, where any odd time could be profitably employed; and the reading-room, with a chance of being quiet and undisturbed; and then what with drills and fatigue duty and the rest, the young soldiers are always ready for a comfortable snooze. For they were turned out early in the morning and were kept at it pretty well till tea-time, about four. After that their time was their own in a general way, unless on guard that night.

Of course all this had to go to Mrs. Creaker, who still had a kindly feeling for Tom, although she could not persuade her husband to share it. There were others, however, who did not require any persuading to share in this regard. The young women before alluded to had been his friends in his hours of idleness. Somehow the secret had leaked out, and it had become generally known that Tom had gone for a soldier, and the result was an amount of sympathy and kindly feeling on his behalf that was really touching. The amount of latent military feeling that showed itself in female bosoms, if known to the authorities, would have justified them in proposing to raise a regiment of Amazons. It must be cavalry, by the way. The women to a man—if the phrase may be allowed—will go for horsemanship. The general outcry was: "Oh, why did Tom go into a stupid infantry regiment; he would have been so lovely as a dragoon!"

As it happened Tom had taken advice upon this matter—the advice of a hard-headed Scotch sergeant, who had decidedly pronounced for the infantry of the line—that is, for a decent well-educated young man who meant to make the army his profession and hoped to rise in it. For one thing there are many more well-educated young fellows in the ranks of the cavalry than in the infantry, and consequently the chance of rapidly rising to the non-commissioned rank so much the less. And then the duties are much more engrossing and afford less opportunity for self-improvement. But the main thing, perhaps, that influenced Tom, was a half-acknowledged hope that one day or other he might win his commission. Not one of those commissions granted exclusively to deserving soldiers; for respectable as is the position of the regimental quartermaster or riding-master, it is not one that would tempt a young

fellow of spirit and courage. No, let me be a combatant officer, or leave me in the ranks, he would say. And this was just Tom's feeling, that if he had great good luck, and kept himself coached up so as to be qualified for the examination, he might some day, before he was too old, gain his commission as lieutenant. The Scotch sergeant shook his head over this, and when Tom triumphantly pointed out this passage in the little tract before alluded to, "A limited number of non-commissioned officers who are recommended by their commanding officers, and who are able to pass the qualifying examination, are annually selected for commissions as lieutenants," "A verra leemited number, indeed ye'll find it," rejoined the sergeant, and opined that this regulation was for the benefit of young men who were unable to pass for Sandhurst, but who had influence enough to get pushed through the ranks in this way. But then, said Tom hopefully, perhaps there'll be an improvement before long; perhaps the example of the French will be followed, who give something like a third of their commissions to men from the ranks. And Tom is sure that, if some such prospect as this were offered, there would be a regular rush to the ranks of decent well-educated young fellows, well-fed, well-grown, well-born many of them, if that is a consideration, ready to take their chance in the rough and tumble of a soldier's career, with the hope of this prize, which is valued at far more than its intrinsic worth.

And in this way would be tapped a fresh source of supply. The fitful stream of needy lads, who take to the army as a last resource, would be supplemented by a more regular flow, the élite, in many respects, of English youth. There is no want of martial ardour among them. The difficulty rather is to find anybody who in his youth has not been fired with the military aspiration. And now that for good or ill the whole constitution of the army is changed, why should you not offer the aspiring British youth the one thing that will tempt him to join the ranks?

However, we are forgetting Tom and his female friends, who are pining with anxiety to see him. There is quite a conspiracy among them to induce Mrs. Creaker to have Tom home for his furlough. Creaker is to be got rid of for a time, and Tom to have the run of the house in his absence. Mrs. Creaker has half consented to join the plot, but then what is she to

do with Tom when she gets him? She can't take him about shopping with her in his scarlet tunic, and has he any private clothes, and will he come with his things in a kind of bolster, as she has seen soldiers sometimes at railway-stations? And this private clothes difficulty turns out a serious one. For we are told that it is a rank offence against the Mutiny Acts and the Articles of War, for a private soldier to appear in public out of uniform. He is liable to be treated as a deserter, and hauled off by the nearest policeman, and there would be a disgrace for the house! And somebody who is well informed on the subject, informs us that any police-constable, or officer of the peace, can stop poor Tom and demand his furlough, and that this furlough is a most uncompromising document, with a place in it for date of last offence, as if it were a ticket-of-leave for a convict. The young women are quite ready to face the difficulty; they pooh-pooh the Mutiny Act, and talk lightly of the Articles of War. Mr. Creaker must be got to sign a cheque before he leaves, that will provide Tom with a good outfit and pocket-money for his furlough.

All these difficulties are, however, solved in a quite unforeseen way. Just as Tom is expecting his first furlough, and wondering where he shall spend the time, the difficulty with Egypt comes to a crisis, and his battalion is ordered off to the East, and Tom sails away with the rest. Almost before we have time to be uneasy about him, we hear that victory has crowned our arms, and that the soldiers are all coming back. Tom writes home a flaming account of Tel-el-Kebir, and Creaker, in spite of himself, is so elated, that he actually takes the letter into the City to read to some of his cronies. And when the troops are marched past the Queen, he spends a fabulous sum in hiring windows to see the procession. Tom is on the look-out for us, and waves his helmet, regardless of discipline. He flushes through the bright bronze of his sunburnt face, as he sees the young women who have come to welcome him home. None but the brave deserve the fair!

After this Tom gets a week's leave and spends it at Bayswater by special invitation from Creaker. Tom in his white helmet and serge-suit is quite a lion in the neighbourhood. The small boys assemble and cheer him, and everybody calls to congratulate the hero of Tel-el-Kebir. He is a corporal now, has fairly started on the upward path, and is vastly pleased with his

first promotion. It means eightpence a day more pay too, and that gives him nearly nine shillings a week for pocket-money, with no trouble in making both ends meet.

One day, after dinner, Creaker passes the wine—Tom has not yet been affiliated to the blue ribbon, but threatens it, just to set an example to the privates, he says—however, Creaker looks over his wine-glass at Tom in a meaning way, and thus addresses him:

"Tom, these few months have made a man of you; I fancied they would, and therefore I didn't much oppose your joining. Only I think you've had enough of it. Come, I'll write you a cheque for ten pounds, and you shall buy yourself out, my boy, and take a seat in my office."

"Ten pounds won't buy me now," said Tom. "I'm no longer a recruit; it will take thirty or forty pounds now. And I doubt whether the colonel would part with me; and I assure you I don't feel inclined to part with him. I'm getting a position now in the regiment. No, no; you keep your money in your pocket, old fellow."

"Oh, the money doesn't matter," said Creaker vaingloriously; "if it were a hundred I'd buy you out, Tom, now I've taken a fancy to do it."

Tom would give no immediate answer, although his sister urged him strongly to accept her husband's offer.

"You don't know what he might not do for you, Tom," she urged.

But Tom's notion was, now that he had begun it, to go through with it, and try to do something for himself. For what will he be in Creaker's office?—a hireling who can be replaced at any moment—with a whole row of hungry fellows waiting to snatch the morsel out of his mouth. Now, as a soldier, he is a person sure to be in demand sooner or later; and the possibility of war and its perils gives an element of dignity to existence, and invests the coarse tunic of the soldier with a kind of classic grace. And so with many thanks to his brother-in-law, Tom declines his offer.

"Ah," said Creaker maliciously, "it's all very well now, but before long you'll be wanting to marry somebody. And how then? Would you like to take your wife into barracks?"

"Well," said Tom, "I don't think a soldier has any business to get married—not as a private, anyhow—and with short service there is no reason in it; time

enough for that when a man is passed into the reserve. But, mind you, a married sergeant is not so badly off. If he marries with permission—and as seventy-five per cent. of the sergeants are allowed to marry, there's practically no difficulty—the sergeant gets a room to himself, and his ration of bread and meat is pretty nearly enough for two. Then with his ration of fuel and light, and his half-a-crown a day or so, he isn't rich, indeed, but he needn't starve."

"All very fine," cried Mrs. Creaker; "but I should like to know what one of those Dashwood girls, that you were so sweet upon, Tom, would say to such a prospect."

"Well," said Tom, flushing and laughing uneasily, "I can't afford to buy hot-house grapes at ten shillings a pound," helping himself liberally to some very fine ones as he spoke; "but I won't say they are sour for all that. Look here, we'll have a big row before long, and then I'll come home a captain, and marry Bella Dashwood."

Just then came a letter for Tom, from the sergeant-major of his battalion, saying that they were ordered to Aldershot, and that Tom was to join there on the expiration of his leave.

"Look at that," said Tom, "there's always something stirring in a soldier's life."

"Aldershot—eh," said Creaker, who was somewhat mellowed and softened with an after-dinner feeling of general benevolence. "We'll come over and see you, Tom, as soon as you're settled, and I'll have a talk to your commanding officer."

"Oh yes, that will be famous," cried Mrs. Creaker; "we'll come and see the soldier at home."

BY THE YEW HEDGE.

Up and down the terrace pacing, where the winter sunlight glowed,
And the sound of falling waters timed my footsteps
as I trode,
Pacing where the tall yew hedges kept the bitter
blast away,
And the noontide smiled like summer on the
January day.

Up and down the terrace pacing, for a musing hour
alone,
While the river's music mingled with the baffled
east wind's moan;
And a presence seemed beside me, very close and
very dear,
A strong hand my hand was clasping, a low voice
was in my ear.

Words of counsel, words of comfort, words of dear
companionship,
And the blue eyes spoke as softly as the mobile
eager lip;
Hope grew brighter, grief grew sweeter, doubt,
ashamed, shrank quite away,
As we two paced on together in the January
day.

Swift and sweet the moments passed me, as the sun-
shine paled o'erhead,
And to common life returning, fell the slow reluc-
tant tread;
Yet my hushed heart from its commune, patience
strength and courage drew;
And north skies with southern splendour gilded all
the darkling yew.

DOCTOR AND PATIENT.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"WELL, doctor, what's the verdict? Am I condemned to death, or are you going to reprieve me?"

"I think I can reprieve you. But I can't promise to do more."

"I never expected it. I know my state quite as well as you—I haven't a year's life in me. Now don't begin to talk the usual rubbish; you ought to know me well enough by this time. Can you give me six months?"

"Not in England."

"Where?"

"Somewhere in the south—say Nice or Cannes. Nice by preference."

"All right, Nice by all means. When can I travel?"

"Early next week, if you rest the remainder of this."

Mr. Fletcher gave a dissatisfied grunt as he turned himself in his bed.

"Look here, Maitland," he said when he had settled himself into a new position; "if you think that at my time of life I'm going to gad about foreign countries by myself, you're mistaken. You'll have to come with me."

The doctor smiled; he was pleasantly surprised to hear his patient make the suggestion, but he did not wish him to see how gratified he was.

"What is to become of my practice meanwhile?" he asked.

"Oh, your practice must take care of itself; look upon this journey as a holiday taken rather earlier than usual. See me safely to Nice, put me into the hands of a good doctor there, and then you can leave me to end my days in peace. I think you will do that for three hundred and expenses?"

"I would do it for less," was Maitland's reply.

"I don't want you to. I'm rich enough, as you well know, to pay well for what people do for me. What do you suppose I want to keep my money for? I can't take it with me, can I—eh?"

"Not beyond Nice," replied the young

doctor, using the freedom which his eccentric patron liked.

"Good, and I sha'n't want much there; I can't make much of a hole in my property in six months, however hard I try; though I believe that young scamp of a nephew of mine will grudge me my daily drive."

Maitland was silent; it was not his place to foster the breach between uncle and nephew, whatever his private opinion of Fred Dexter's character might be.

"You have a father, haven't you?" asked the old gentleman after a pause.

"Yes; he is still living."

"Then treat him better than my son treated me; it will make him happier, if it doesn't make you."

"I wish you would let me speak to you about your son," said Maitland.

"Thank you; I'd sooner hear you on any other subject."

"I don't often trouble you with this one."

"No; or I should change my doctor."

"You have done him injustice, at all events," said Maitland rather warmly, "and I think you will live to repent it."

"In that case you must make me live longer than you profess to be able to do," retorted the invalid. "Don't renew the subject, please, till I ask you. Come in to-morrow, and we will make final arrangements about the journey."

Maitland knew Mr. Fletcher intimately enough to know that the interview was over. He left the room, and proceeded on his round of afternoon visits, reaching his small house about an hour before dinner.

A letter was waiting for him; it was directed in a lady's hand, and bore the postmark of Nice. He read it through twice, apparently enjoying the perusal, then he lay back in his chair and thought.

"It's a stroke of good fortune, most decidedly," he soliloquised. "Amy is at Nice, and now I shall be able to go and see her. That will be a pleasant surprise for her, I hope. I'm afraid she doesn't get too many of them. Luckily Mr. Fletcher will never guess the reason of my recommending Nice; after all, it is just as good for him as any other place, and I may be doing him a greater service than he dreams of in taking him there, if things fall out as they should."

In the midst of his reverie the servant entered, bringing him another letter.

"Please, sir, this came this morning, but you don't seem to have seen it."

Maitland opened it, not with the alacrity

he had shown with the first. It ran thus:

"DEAR MAITLAND,—How is the old boy? This question will savour of nepotice affection or interested selfishness; you may take your own meaning. I ask, because I am amongst the sharks again, and until I can pacify them with a feed on my uncle's accumulations, they are insatiable. I want to know, as a matter of business, how long he is likely to linger on this earth if he has made a will in my favour, as he knows very well I shall not be sorry to get it proved. Why should I hesitate to own as truth that which he taunts me with every time we meet? Could you lend me fifty till the time comes? Charge fifty per cent. if you like. Tell me truth about my uncle; I can bear it even if you give him five years longer. I shall bear it still better if you confine him to five months.—Yours,
"F. DEXTER."

"Heartless brute!" thought Maitland on finishing, "though certainly he never makes a pretence of being anything else. It's fortunate for him that his uncle knows so little about him or his chances of succession would be considerably smaller."

He scribbled a note in reply to the letter simply informing Dexter of his uncle's intended journey and of his state of health. He omitted to give any opinion as to the probable length of his tenure of life.

Dr. Maitland was still a young man in his profession, though he was thirty-four years of age. He had entered it late; his prospects were fairly good, but hitherto his practice had been restricted—in a country town it takes time for a new man to make a position, as every family of standing already possesses a medical man and is unwilling to change. However, he did not despair of getting on. He had every reason for wishing to do so, for he was desirous of getting married. He was not yet even engaged; he had secret reasons for not proposing at present to the girl he loved. Whether he would ever be in a position to do so was more than he could as yet foresee.

Mr. Fletcher had been his patient during the last five years—in fact ever since he began practice. This was partly because he had quarrelled with all the other medical men of the town, but chiefly for a reason that he would never own. This was that Maitland had been a great friend many years before of his only son Charlie.

Charles Fletcher was of a very different stamp from his father. The latter was as a rule selfish and arrogant—diligent in business and economical in habits. He had bred his son up in his own footsteps, but had found that he could not mould his character as he wished. Charlie was inclined to extravagance, held the opinion that money was of no use unless spent, thought that life should be valued for its opportunities of pleasure rather than of gain, and in countless ways ran counter to his father's life-long maxims. Quarrel followed quarrel; the fact that he loved his son so well only made the father more bitterly resent the want of affection and respect with which he was treated, till one day the crisis arrived.

Mr. Fletcher had determined that his son should marry early, hoping by this means to make him settle down. He informed him of his wishes accordingly, pointing out that he intended to make his future prospects depend on the propriety of his selection. Charlie postponed the matter as long as possible, until at last a confession became inevitable. He was married already.

This put a stop to all hope of reconciliation; there was a violent scene, during which the father refused to recognise the marriage, and told his son he must shift for himself. This Charlie said he was quite ready to do, and that his father need not fear any applications for assistance from him. If money made men behave like his father, the less he had of it the better.

A year afterwards Charles Fletcher died in Paris. His father refused even to make enquiry as to his wife, but was informed shortly afterwards of her death also by a paper sent to him from some unknown quarter. He said nothing to any of his friends, but his health gradually broke down, and from being a robust, active man he became in the course of years an invalid. A second attack of paralysis was the immediate cause of Mr. Maitland's last visit, and no one knew better than the patient that his days were numbered.

"Ah well!" he used sometimes to say, "I don't want to live and several people want me to die—the majority ought to have their wish."

CHAPTER II.

HOWEVER, when Mr. Fletcher found himself at Nice, with its charming surroundings and delightful climate, he almost began to have regrets that he must so soon bid farewell to existence.

"I wish, Maitland, I had come here sooner," he said one day. "Why didn't you order me here long ago?"

"It wouldn't have done you any good, and I thought you preferred England."

"So I do to live in, but this is the sort of place to die in."

Maitland made no attempt to turn his thoughts; his patient always resented it if he did.

"I hope you are having a pleasant time here as well," continued Mr. Fletcher. "I don't want to monopolise you, you know."

"Thanks, I think I've shown you I can leave you alone occasionally."

"I didn't know you had friends here. Who are those people I saw you talking to this morning in the gardens?"

"The Kestertons; I only know them slightly."

"H—m!" coughed Mr. Fletcher. "I should have thought you knew one of them rather well. She's a pleasant-looking girl."

Maitland tried his best to look unconscious, and flattered himself he succeeded.

"Oh, I know the one you mean," he said, "but she isn't one of the Kestertons, she's a Miss Fletcher."

"Same name as mine? Well, Fletchers are common enough."

"Yes, but not such Fletchers as she," remarked Maitland.

The old gentleman did not reply; his thoughts had evidently wandered back to old times. Maitland was careful not to disturb him; he had noticed lately that his reveries had become more frequent, and that they seemed to soften the acerbity of his nature.

They were seated on the terrace, where they often came to watch the passers-by; it seemed to please the invalid to see the gay life of which he could no longer be a partaker.

The young doctor was still sitting silently when he was interrupted with: "Bring her here; I want to speak to her."

He looked up and saw the young lady of whom they had been speaking approaching them. By her side ran a little girl of seven or eight years old.

"Do you wish to know her?" asked Maitland.

"Yes; why should you be afraid of me? I'm not likely to be a rival."

Maitland felt this was a home-thrust; the old man's eyes were keen enough yet. He went forward to meet Miss Fletcher, closely watched by his patient.

"Amy," he said, "I want to introduce you to a patient of mine. Oddly enough,

he has the same name as yours. You will do him and me a kindness if you will talk to him a few minutes."

"With pleasure," replied Amy, adding in a half-whisper: "So it is a kindness to you for me to talk to someone else, is it?"

"Sit down here, my dear," said the invalid, after a few minutes' general talk. "Maitland, you take little missy to see that wonderful cactus at the end of the terrace; I want to talk to Miss Fletcher a little."

Maitland obeyed, glad to find that he had interested his patient in a new direction. He took little Cissy's hand and marched her off towards the cactus, though she seemed scarcely to like leaving Miss Fletcher.

She soon began talking about her, and found that her companion was an appreciative listener. Not only that, but he asked questions about her; a most unjustifiable proceeding, of course; but he salved his conscience by arguing that nothing Cissy could say would alter his opinion of her governess, and it was very pleasant to hear her praises sounded by a disinterested observer.

At the end of a quarter of an hour they returned to the seat. Amy rose as they approached.

"Maitland," said Mr. Fletcher, "I am going to stay out here for another hour or so; you had better accompany this young lady home. You will find me here when you return."

Maitland did not make any very lengthened protest.

"How do you like my old friend?" he asked when they were out of hearing.

"I think he is delightful," was Amy's reply.

"What did you talk about?"

"All sorts of things. He asked me a lot of questions: how old I was—that was very rude, wasn't it?—and about my father and mother, and how it was I lived with the Kestertons."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him that you could tell him more about me than I could myself. He seemed rather surprised. I should not wonder if you came in for a cross-examination this evening."

"Did he ask you to come and talk to him again?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I suppose because he liked your society," replied Maitland, wilfully misinterpreting her question. "Be sure you come to the terrace at the same time to-morrow."

"Yes, I will make a point of it, so you can consider yourself relieved."

"I may be relieved, but I don't intend to be dismissed again," replied Maitland with a laugh. "I suppose I have no excuse good enough for coming in?" he added as they reached the door of the villa hired by the Kestertons.

"I must leave you to settle that question."

"I have no excuse at all, but I'm coming in all the same if you will let me."

"It isn't my house," replied Amy.

"That is a very ungracious invitation," said Maitland as he accompanied her into the hall.

When Maitland, half an hour later, returned to his patient, he found him talking with a man who was sitting next him. "He is making acquaintances to-day," thought the young doctor. As he approached, however, he saw that the supposed stranger was Mr. Fletcher's nephew, Fred Dexter.

"Ah, Maitland!" was his greeting, "here I am, you see."

"Yes," put in the old gentleman, on whose nature his nephew always acted as an irritant; "'where the carcass is' you know, Maitland."

"Oh, come, uncle, you're not a carcass yet," protested Dexter. "You might have blamed me with more reason if I'd waited till you were one before I came to see you."

"He seems to be under the impression that I shall be able to blame him after I'm dead," remarked Mr. Fletcher sarcastically to Maitland.

"Oh, come, uncle, I don't see why you should always put the worst interpretation on all I say."

"It won't bear any other," pettishly replied the old man. "Who told you I was here?"

"Maitland. I wrote and asked him about you."

"Do you mind letting me see that letter?"

Maitland here interposed, and said he believed he had not kept it.

"That's a pity," said Dexter; "I should like to have shown it you that you might see what my letters about you are like."

"Let us go in," said Mr. Fletcher; "I'm getting tired. You will dine with us to-night?"

"Many thanks, uncle, but I've promised to see some people to-night."

"Who?"

"They are called Kesterton."

"Do you know them?" enquired Maitland rather anxiously.

"Oh yes, very well. Do you?"

"Slightly."

"There's a very nice girl in the house, a sort of companion, or governess. She's called Fletcher, same name as uncle's. Odd coincidence, isn't it?"

"Come!" said Mr. Fletcher peremptorily.

After dinner, instead of trying to get his usual nap, Mr. Fletcher sat in his easy-chair, evidently in a very excited frame of mind. He seemed undecided what to do; he fidgeted about with one book and another till at last he threw them down, and called out "Maitland!"

"Yes."

"Let me see the letter that precious nephew of mine wrote you. You haven't destroyed it. I could see well enough that you were only trying to screen him. He said I could have read it if it had not been torn up."

"I have it, it's true," replied Maitland; "but I can't show it you without his permission."

"He gave it."

"But I told him I thought I had destroyed it."

"Very well, if you don't show it me I shall conclude the worst; it's clear you would let me see it in a moment if it was fit to be seen. Fred had better take care; he knows that he is my heir, but he doesn't know how near he is to having his expectations disappointed. I'm afraid he is a scamp, and it will be a bad job for him if he can't conceal the fact a few months longer."

Maitland did not attempt to defend Dexter, both his conscience and inclination were against such a course. He knew that he was, in spite of his advantages, a loose, untrustworthy, and selfish fellow, and he had strong reasons for hoping that his succession to Mr. Fletcher's money might never become a fact.

The old man seemed inclined to talk this evening. He turned himself round to face Maitland, and said: "Who is Amy Fletcher?"

"She is governess at the Kestertons'."

"Why? Who got her the place?"

"I did," replied Maitland, looking rather guilty.

"H—m! you seem to take a considerable interest in this young lady. Has she any money?"

"None whatever."

"Then who paid for her schooling?"

"Her father left enough to cover most of the expense."

"And you supplied the rest?"

Maitland's look was sufficient to condemn him.

"It's a nice romantic story," continued the old man; "when do you propose to marry her?"

"I don't know," replied the young doctor; "perhaps not at all."

"You mean she doesn't care for you?"

"No, I don't mean that; but I am in a very peculiar position in regard to her."

"What is the peculiarity?"

"Do you ask me to tell you?"

"Yes; why not?"

"I didn't like to do so without your asking me directly. I have reason to believe that she may be an heiress."

"I don't see why that should stop you."

"No, perhaps not; though people would doubt my sincerity in proposing to a girl so rich as she may become."

"It's very odd that an heiress should be a governess."

"She doesn't know who she is," explained Maitland. "I am the only one in the world who does know. Suppose that I ask her hand—she may accept me; afterwards she discovers that she is very rich; what will she think of me then? She will judge me to be the most despicable man in the world."

"Why not tell her she is an heiress, and then propose? If she loves you, the fact that she is rich will only add to her willingness to accept you."

"I cannot tell her, because she may never be so."

Mr. Fletcher looked puzzled. "There is more in this than you tell me, Maitland," he said. "You've treated me very well; I've taken a liking for you, and for the girl too, for that matter. I should like to help you if I can, and feel I have done one kindness before it is out of my power to do any. How did you come to have this girl on your hands?"

"I knew her father and mother very well. They died abroad within a few months of each other. I was only a very young man then, as you may imagine; but they left me in charge of their only daughter, then scarcely more than an infant. My mother brought her up; when she was old enough she was sent to school as I told you."

This simple recital interested the old man more than he cared to show. He

could not prevent his voice from trembling as he asked :

"Is her grandfather alive?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Why does he not support her?"

"He does not know of her existence. He quarrelled with his son, who went abroad and died there, telling me never to let his father know that he left a child. I have kept the secret till now."

"You may as well finish the story now you have gone so far," said the invalid, falling back in his chair. "What was her father's name?"

"Charles Fletcher."

"My son?"

"Yes, your son."

"Then Amy is my grandchild?"

Maitland assented.

"She does not know it?"

"No; she is not aware of the existence of any relative. Your son made me promise she should be kept in ignorance of her relationship to you. I shall never tell her."

"That will do for to-night. I am tired and excited, my head aches abominably. I will go to bed."

Maitland came downstairs so soon as he had seen his patient attended to. He too felt excited and feverish. He determined to take a stroll in the cool evening air. His object had been accomplished; he had made known to his patient the existence of his granddaughter. Would the result answer his expectations? If so, what would it be his duty to do?

He was still revolving the matter in his mind, trying to look at it dispassionately as an outsider and failing miserably, when he heard himself accosted.

"Hullo, Maitland, I thought I recognised you. Gorgeous night, isn't it? Are you in a hurry?"

"I must get back soon," was the reply.

"I'll walk with you if you don't mind. The truth is I've something very important to tell you. I've made a terrific discovery."

"Well?" queried Maitland.

"You know that Miss Fletcher who is companion or something at the Kestertons? I got talking to her to-night pretty confidentially, and somehow happened to ask her the name of her father. You might have knocked me down with a feather, as they say, when she told me it was Charles Fletcher. You know who he was, I suppose?"

"Mr. Fletcher's son?"

"Just so. Sweet news for me, isn't it? I've always supposed myself the only relation the old boy has, and he has told me times

enough that I'm his heir. Now if he hasn't made his will I shall be in a hole, for everything will go to this girl."

"She does not know about it, does she?"

"No, thank goodness! No one knows it but ourselves."

"Why have you confided in me?" asked Maitland.

"There you are, you see," exclaimed Dexter. "I hadn't decided whether to tell you or not, when suddenly you appeared before me, and that settled it. It seemed providential."

"That's scarcely a sufficient reason for your action, I'm afraid."

"No, by Jove! you're right. To tell the truth for once, I wanted to find out if the old boy has made a will, and I thought you were the one most likely to know. Then it struck me it was quite possible you might discover the secret without my help, as I know you are a friend of the Kestertons and acquainted with this girl."

"I've known it a long time."

"Have you though? My instinct was right. Did my uncle know that Charlie left a child?"

"No; he wished it to be kept secret."

"Well," said Dexter, after a few moments' deliberation, "I'm not so safe as I should like to be. It seems to me I've only one course open to me, which will ensure everything turning out right."

"What is that?"

"I must marry Amy."

Maitland gave a start. "Marry Amy!" he repeated.

"Yes. Why not? I must get engaged as soon as possible. When my uncle dies, if he has left me his property, I can break off the engagement if I want to without much difficulty; and if she gets it all for want of a will, I must press forward our marriage. You see I'm showing my confidence in you in telling you my plans beforehand, as I take it for granted you mean to let Amy know who she is after my uncle's death, unless he leaves everything to me by will."

"You are quite right," replied Maitland stiffly. He had recovered his calmness now, and had need of it all to restrain himself. "It certainly was my intention to let her know. I do not promise you I shall not tell her at once, in order that she may have an opportunity of urging her claim."

"Oh, confound it all, Maitland, what good will that do? Let it stand as it is for a time at any rate. Give a fellow a chance. You see, as it is, I can

make love to her as a man with good expectations, and she's only a poor governess; but reverse our positions, and where's my chance? No, you must let matters stand for a week or two."

"I won't promise anything now," replied Maitland. "I shall see you to-morrow, and will tell you my decision then."

He turned away without even saying good-night. Dexter was such a mixture of apparent good-nature and selfishness; he had such a way of taking him into his confidence and making him a sort of partner in his disgraceful plans; that Maitland was disgusted beyond measure. And this was the man who was his rival for Amy! And his own hands were tied!

He rose early, after an almost sleepless night. He found that his patient was out of sorts, evidently the result of want of rest. He made no allusion to the events of the previous day; both of them seemed unwilling to start the subject. However, in the afternoon, Fletcher abruptly said:

"Maitland, I wish you would send to my nephew's hotel. You know it, I suppose?"

"Yes. Are you going to the terrace this afternoon?"

"Yes; the same time as yesterday. I want to see Amy."

Half an hour afterwards, Dexter made his appearance. Mr. Fletcher asked Maitland to leave them and rejoin them on the terrace in an hour. As he went out, Dexter managed to whisper:

"You won't tell her?"

"No," replied Maitland firmly.

The interview between uncle and nephew was rather long. Mr. Fletcher told Dexter that he was not so ignorant of his doings as he supposed, and that he had for some time doubted whether he ought to let such a scapegrace be his heir.

"I was once harsh to my son," said the old man, "and I lost him. I determined to make every allowance for you. I don't ask you if you deserve it, but I should like to know what your plans are. Do you intend to marry?"

This sudden question took Dexter off his guard. Making up his mind on the spur of the moment, he answered:

"Yes, sir."

"Whom?"

"Well, it isn't quite settled yet between us. I have not declared myself yet, but, if I obtain your consent, I will do so at the earliest opportunity."

"Who is she?"

"She is the governess at the Kester-tons," replied his nephew boldly. "You've never seen her, I suppose, but she is a very charming girl."

"No fortune, I presume?"

"I believe not."

"Then you can't marry unless with my money?"

Dexter rather uneasily answered:

"No, sir."

"Very well," said his uncle. "I have no objection to your making a love-match. I tell you what I will do. It would be unsatisfactory for both of you if you, a rich man, were to marry her, a pauper. If you win her consent I will give mine, and make her heiress of half of what I have. You will then be on equal terms, as man and wife should be."

Dexter was growing more and more uncomfortable. This was far from the state of things he wished for.

"You are very thoughtful, uncle," he murmured.

"I should like to see this young lady," continued Mr. Fletcher. "I presume that by birth and education she is fitted to be your wife? You have made enquiries, I presume?"

"Well, uncle, I thought that would be rather wanting in delicacy. She is evidently a lady."

"Your sentiments do you honour, Fred. It was quite right of you not to make impertinent enquiries, especially considering her position."

Dexter felt he had done it now. It was impossible for him to confess that he knew Amy's identity. After a little further conversation they started for the terrace, where Maitland was shortly to meet them.

Meanwhile, the young doctor had been spending an unhappy hour. He was sure that Dexter would take the opportunity of telling his uncle his intention to marry Amy; the probability was greatly in favour of the old man's approval of his nephew's suit rather than of his—Maitland's. One thing he was sure of: that he must keep silent till Dexter had either won or lost, and that, if he won, he must keep silent for ever. His only hope was that Amy loved him. Yet why should she? He had always been careful to treat her as a young sister, and if occasionally he had been conscious of saying something which was not quite appropriate for a brother, she had never given him reason for believing that she had ever contemplated the possibility of a closer relationship between them than had

always existed. Yet, if he lost her, and to such a heartless scoundrel! No! he would never let her marry that other. Yet what could he do if she accepted him?

His mind was still full of the matter when he found himself on the terrace, near the usual seat of the invalid. Mr. Fletcher and his nephew were already there, and close by them stood Amy. She had evidently only that moment arrived. Dexter rose, and with considerable eagerness offered her his seat, and began to introduce her to his uncle.

"There is no necessity," interrupted Mr. Fletcher, "this young lady and I have met before."

Dexter looked surprised and annoyed. He had made good use of his time during the morning, which he had spent in the company of Amy, doing all he could to compress a courtship into a couple of hours. He had told her he wanted to introduce her to his uncle, but had not mentioned his name, and Amy never imagined that the uncle was the same old gentleman whose acquaintance she had already made.

At this moment Maitland came up. He took off his hat to Amy, and remained standing near.

For some time the conversation was to the last degree commonplace; not one of the men seemed inclined to be the first to broach the subject that each was thinking of. At last Mr. Fletcher, after a painful cough, said:

"My dear, I want to speak to you seriously for a minute or two. You will excuse an old man, who has not many months to live, if he says things a little bluntly. Try and suppose that he is afraid he has not time to do otherwise."

Amy looked surprised, but said nothing.

"My nephew," continued Mr. Fletcher, "has told me that he wishes you to be his wife. He has not, I believe, confessed as much to you, knowing that the possibility of his marrying depends on me. I have told him that, if he gains your consent, he will not marry a penniless girl, for I shall give you the same as I shall give him. So you see, you may rely entirely on your feelings in giving your answer; it will not be a case of marrying for money, but only for love. What do you say?"

Amy said nothing. She turned her eyes on Maitland, who persistently kept his averted.

"This is too sudden, uncle," pleaded Dexter.

"Perhaps it is," assented the old man. "I

do not ask for a decisive answer now. Plead your own cause, my lad, during the next week, and then Amy shall give her reply."

Amy turned her head.

"There is no necessity to wait for a week," she said; "my mind is quite made up. I can never marry Mr. Dexter."

"My dear girl," persisted Mr. Fletcher, "do not make up your mind so swiftly. No doubt my blunt way of putting the matter has pained you. I can see you are agitated. Let me plead for my nephew. His love for you is disinterested, he knows you but as a charming young lady who is at present occupying a position unworthy of her. He knows nothing of you whatever beyond that; judge then whether you are treating him quite fairly in refusing to listen to him. It is not so easy to find young men, nowadays, who are capable of displaying such disinterested earnestness and devotion in seeking for a wife. He tells me he is even ignorant of the name of your parents—does not that show he values you for yourself?"

Dexter had tried once or twice to interrupt his uncle, but in vain. However, he now managed to interpose with:

"Really, uncle, you appear to imagine that——"

But he was interrupted in his turn by Amy.

"Did Mr. Dexter tell you he did not know who my father was?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Mr. Fletcher, "and I applauded the delicacy of feeling he showed."

"I must tell you then that he did ask me, and seemed very surprised to hear his name. There seems to be some mystery about it, for its mention seems to have sufficed to turn Mr. Dexter from a casual acquaintance into an ardent admirer."

Dexter stood abashed; he did not attempt to defend himself.

"So, sir," said his uncle severely, "it seems that you do know who this young lady is. I had my suspicions, and that is why I have said what I have, thinking I should catch you in your own trap."

"I thought you would be pleased if I married her," pleaded Dexter.

"Don't say another word, sir. Leave us now; come to my rooms this evening, I shall have something to say to you then."

Dexter walked away as carelessly as he could.

"Come a little closer to me, my dear child," said Mr. Fletcher in a tender tone, as soon as his nephew was out of sight.

"I have some news for you. You must think me a very strange old man—so I am, perhaps. You think I have been very rude and unkind, but it was for your sake. No one is near us now; put your arms round my neck and kiss me and call me grandpapa."

Amy looked at him in astonishment for a moment, and then glanced at Maitland. His look reassured her; she flung her arms round the old man's neck and kissed him.

"Grandpapa!" she exclaimed. "Is it true?"

"Yes, my darling. Ah, if I had only known it before! It's your fault, Maitland."

"Are you quite sure?" he asked.

"Well, no; I suppose it's chiefly mine. Do you think, Amy, you will be able to love me for the few months I have to live?"

"Oh, don't talk of dying, grandpapa; you mustn't."

"Ask Maitland."

"What must I ask him?"

"If he can spare me a part of your affection for a time? Ah, I know all about it, you see; my eyes are not so dim yet, but that I have seen more than either of you imagine. Take her, Maitland."

Maitland did not hesitate long, for Amy's glad look revealed to him that her grandfather had judged her truly.

CARLIN.

THE time-honoured saying, "We know what we are, but we know not what we may be," has seldom been more strikingly exemplified than in the case of two youths, aged respectively fifteen and sixteen, who were seated together one summer morning in the early part of the last century on a stone bench by the side of a small chapel dedicated to the patron saint of a village near Rimini. Their names were Lorenzo Ganganelli and Carlo Bertinazzi; the former destined in after years to exchange his baptismal appellation for that of Clement the Fourteenth, and the latter to become the idol of the Parisians as the popular harlequin of the *Comédie Italienne*. These metamorphoses, however, lay still hidden in the remote future, and their objects on the morning in question were profoundly occupied in solving a difficult puzzle, namely, how to obtain possession of the plentiful store of

copper coins which had been deposited by the passing peasants as an offering to the saint, and were protected from sacrilegious hands by strong iron bars, within which they reposed until removed on the next visit of the authorised alms-collector.

While the pair of scapegraces are concocting all sorts of ingenious plans for the successful appropriation of the treasure, a few words respecting the origin and social position of each may not be out of place.

Lorenzo's parents were of the humbler class of cultivators so numerous in that part of Italy, and owners of half-a-dozen acres of land, which they tilled themselves; Carlo's father, on the contrary, who had enlisted early in life, and had been some years a widower, having nothing but his pay to depend upon, had gladly profited by the chance offered him of placing his only son in a seminary where the children of the poor intended for the clerical profession received a gratuitous education, among his fellow-pupils being the young Ganganelli. There the boys grew up together and became fast friends, the studious Lorenzo devoting his leisure moments to the task of correcting Carlo's ill-spelt themes and exercises, while the latter, who in modern parlance would have been termed the "cock of the school," requited this service by constituting himself on all occasions the champion and protector of his more delicately organised companion. Their holidays were passed at the Ganganelli farm, where they fared but sparingly, and, as may be imagined, they had not a farthing of pocket-money between them. It was with a view of supplying this last deficiency that we find them gazing with longing eyes at the tantalising heap of bajocchi almost within their reach.

"I wonder how many there are," mused Carlo, while the other was mentally engaged in counting them.

"More than a hundred," replied Lorenzo.

"More than a hundred!" repeated his friend, who had never heard of such a sum; "how much cheese would that buy?"

"Enough for all the holidays, and to spare."

"Would it be wrong to take them, do you think?" asked Carlo, after a moment's hesitation.

"Well, if we were not very hungry, I am afraid it would; but as it is——"

"But we are very hungry—at any rate I am."

"So am I," gravely remarked Lorenzo.

"In that case the end justifies the means, so we must see what can be done."

Thereupon, looking about for the longest stick he could find, he introduced it between the bars, and succeeded in slightly displacing one or two of the coins, but that was all; Carlo meanwhile watching the proceedings with a disconsolate air.

"It's no use," sighed the latter. "We had better be off before some one catches us here."

"Wait a moment," objected his more inventive ally, "there must be some means of fishing them out. I have it!" he added triumphantly; "while I go to work, all you have to do is to stand on that rising ground yonder, and if you see any one coming, make the usual signal" (we had forgotten to mention that among other accomplishments Carlo imitated to perfection the braying of a donkey, while his companion was equally renowned for crowing like a cock), "and I will answer with mine. If nobody disturbs me, the bajocchi are ours."

What his friend purposed doing was not very clear to Master Bertinazzi, who nevertheless established himself obediently as sentinel on the prescribed eminence, which overlooked the adjoining fields; while Lorenzo, taking a handful of moist earth from a ditch by the roadside, fixed it firmly to the end of his stick, and recommenced his piscatorial operations so successfully that in a very few minutes the last remaining coin had found its way into his pocket. At that critical instant a warning bray resounded from the post of vantage; having responded to which by an exulting "cock-a-doodle-do," the young marauder hastily rejoined his confederate, and both started on their homeward way, wisely deferring until a more favourable opportunity the equitable division of the spoil. In his old age, when surrounded by a circle of intimates at Chaillot, Carlin frequently related the foregoing anecdote with great gusto, interlarding his imperfect French with Italian "patois," and emphasising his words with the drollest and most expressive pantomimic gestures imaginable. On one occasion, when, inspired by the presence of Goldoni, he had described this juvenile freak with more than usual vivacity, the dramatist quietly enquired if he never felt remorse for having robbed the poor. "Ah, caro mio," replied Carlin, "Lorenzo has no doubt long ago atoned for that trifling peccadillo. Consider the many

opportunities he has since had of making restitution!"

A year or two after this reprehensible exploit the two friends separated; Ganganelli to continue his ecclesiastical studies at Urbino, and Carlo, whose father had in the meantime paid the debt of nature, leaving his son alone in the world, to gain his own livelihood as he best might. Abandoning all idea of a clerical career, for which in truth he had no real vocation, he decided on utilising his natural talent for mimicry by joining one of the strolling companies of actors to be met with at that period in every province of Italy, wandering from place to place as in Scarron's Roman Comique, and earning a precarious subsistence, often barely sufficing to keep body and soul together. Inured as he was to privations, our hero cared little for the hardships he had voluntarily elected to encounter; the adventurous, ever-changing life pleased him, and he was soon perfectly reconciled to the habitual lot of Thespians, namely, to dine one day, and starve the next. The manager of this roving troop found in him a willing and precious recruit, ready to undertake a part at a moment's notice, and invariably delighting his audience by some improvised bit of drollery calculated to put them in good humour, and dispose them to be liberal. His favourite character was harlequin, in the personation of which he became so popular that the mere announcement of Carlin's was sufficient to attract the inhabitants of villages from many leagues round, thereby ensuring an abundant harvest of copper coins and—for nothing was refused—provisions of all kinds, including bread, meat, and even flour, as the case might be.

Little by little, the reputation of the new "Arlecchino" spread from town to town; offers of engagement continually reached him from the proprietors of permanently established theatres, and at length, tempted by the flattering prospects held out to him, he bade adieu not without regret to his less fortunate associates, and set out to give the public of Brescia a taste of his quality. The success of his first appearance was so decisive, that on the following day a contract for a term of years was proposed to him by the manager, which, however, Carlin, whose migratory habits had become a second nature to him, refused to sign; and, at the expiration of the six months' stay previously agreed upon, quitted Brescia for the purpose of fulfilling a similar engagement at Parma.

These peregrinations continued with little intermission for the next ten or twelve years, during which he visited almost every town of note in Italy; reaping fresh laurels wherever he went, and universally acknowledged to be the best representative of the motley personage that had ever trod the boards.

Whether in the course of his wanderings he chanced to meet his former school-fellow is not recorded, but it is certain that for some time after their separation they frequently corresponded with each other; and, to the end of his life, Carlin was wont to affirm that, although to the rest of the world the friend of his youth might be known as the illustrious Clement the Fourteenth, he could never regard him in any other light than that of his old and dearly-loved playmate, Lorenzo.

The retirement from the stage in 1741 of Thomassin, successor of the famous Dominique, having left the *Comédie Italienne* and consequently Paris without a harlequin, Bertinazzi, then in his twenty-eighth year, was induced to repair thither, and was at once engaged to occupy the vacant post. His début was not encouraging; the Parisians, creatures of habit, and accustomed to the broad humour and peculiar mannerisms of his predecessor, failed at first to appreciate the refined grace and vivacity of the new comer, whose conception of the character was strictly in accordance with the traditions of the Italian school. By degrees, however, the versatility of his talent and the expressive originality of his pantomime overcame the prejudices of the public, and before many weeks had elapsed, his quondam depreciators had become his warmest admirers. During forty years, until his final retirement in 1781, his popularity remained unshaken, and his supremacy unquestioned. Notwithstanding his advanced age and increasing corpulence, he still attracted crowds to the theatre by the magic of his name, and retained to the very last his marvellous activity and suppleness of limb. Madame Vigée Le Brun, who saw him towards the close of his career, records her impressions of his acting in her entertaining *Recollections*, as follows: "He played harlequin in mere outlines of pieces, the filling up of which required extreme cleverness and ingenuity on the part of the performer; his inexhaustible spirits and witty sallies, together with a never-failing fund of natural drollery, combined to distinguish him from the

ordinary actor. Although excessively stout, he was singularly agile in every movement, and I have been told that he owed many of his most graceful gestures to his habit of watching kittens at play. When he left the stage, the reign of the *Comédie Italienne* was virtually at an end."

Carlin was never more in his element than when he had established a sort of freemasonry with his audience, addressing himself familiarly to those nearest to him, and indulging in every variety of quip and crank more or less appropriate to the part he was playing. The actor Fleur relates that on one occasion, perceiving a party of children in a box near the stage, he entered into conversation with them, and so delighted the spectators present with his impromptu whimsicalities that they imagined the scene in question to have been arranged beforehand, and, returning to the theatre on the following evening, with one accord demanded its repetition.

From the same authority we learn that once during the dog-days the audience assembled to witness the performance only consisting of two individuals, one of whom, overcome by the intense heat, made his exit at the end of the first piece, Carlin came forward, and addressing the remaining occupant of the pit, besought him as a particular favour, in the event of his meeting anyone he knew as he went out, to inform him that *Arlequin Ermite*, having been received that evening with unbounded applause by a discerning public, would be repeated every night until further notice.

It happened, however, that on another occasion, and from the same cause, one solitary spectator, a stout jovial personage fresh from the country, placidly awaited the rising of the curtain. What was to be done?

"We had better give him back his money," grumbled the *régisseur* Camerani.

"Let me speak first," said Carlin; and, advancing to the front of the stage, made a grotesque bow to the astonished provincial, and addressed him as follows: "Mr. All-alone, my comrades and I, as you may imagine, have no particular wish to exert ourselves in this sultry weather for one person's amusement; but if you insist upon it, of course we must."

"Why, M. Carlin," replied the stout man, highly amused by this preamble, "I came here on purpose to see you act."

"Very good," responded Harlequin with one of his most graceful pirouettes, "we

will do our best to please you," and the piece began.

Before it was over a heavy shower of rain came on, and in a few minutes every place in the theatre was occupied; the actors, enchanted at this unexpected good fortune, played with even more spirit than usual, and the second piece finished amid roars of laughter. Presently Carlin appeared before the curtain, and, looking round as if in search of someone, enquired if Mr. All-alone were still there?

"Certainly, M. Carlin," answered that individual, grinning from ear to ear; "and many thanks to you for a pleasant evening."

"It is I who ought to thank you, Mr. All-alone," replied Carlin, to the intense delight of the rest of the audience, "for without you we should have missed the nine hundred livres which our treasurer has just counted up. So good-night, Mr. All-alone, and au revoir!"

For a long time after, this remained a standing joke with the company; and whenever, either on account of the heat or any other cause, opinions were divided as to the advisability of announcing the evening's performance, Carlin invariably decided the question in the affirmative, by suggesting that perhaps Mr. All-alone would come again.

From the date of his retirement in 1781 to his death in 1783, the celebrated comedian continued to inhabit his suburban villa at Chaillot—unpleasantly situated, according to Fleury, between a smith's forge and a copper foundry—where he was wont to receive his intimates, and regale them with his favourite maraschino. On the wall of his usual sitting-room in this modest retreat hung the original painting by De Lorme of the best engraved portrait of the incomparable harlequin; and beneath it, in the autograph of the poet Guichard, were inscribed the following lines:

Dans ses gestes, ses tons, c'est la Nature même;
Sous le masque, on l'admire; à découvert, on
l'aime!

TIME BARGAINS.

A STORY IN TEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT—what! telling fortunes—eh?" said Mr. Jellicop with a broad smile, as he came forward. "Many's the pretty girl whose fortune I told when I was a young blade. And half of 'em took all I said for gospel truth."

Miss Ramsay had crossed to the window.

"He called me Lillian!" she whispered to herself. "Would he have done that unless—?"

"Miss Ramsay and I were going as far as the hayfield," said Marmaduke with a fine assumption of indifference.

"You'll get your jackets wet if you do. There's a black cloud rolling up the valley that means to pepper us before long. You had better come with me, the pair of you, as far as the greenhouse and see how my cucumbers are getting on."

"Fine vegetable—cucumber," said Marmaduke sententiously.

"As I came through the drawing-room just now," continued Mr. Jellicop, "who should I see there but those two young idiots."

"Two young idiots, sir?"

"My niece Linda and young Dane, I mean. He was gaping out of the window at one end of the room, she out of the window at the other end; neither of them looking at each other, neither of them speaking to each other, and yet seeming as if they couldn't bear to be out of each other's sight. Ugh! it's my opinion that they are fonder of each other this minute than ever they were in their lives before."

"Oh, uncle, do you really think so?" asked Lillian earnestly. She had come back from the window by this time, and was clasping one of his arms with both her hands.

"Hang me if I don't! What a joke it would be if we could bring them together again—eh?"

"How I wish we could!"

"Too late in the day, sir, to think of that," said Marmaduke.

"I'm not so sure on that point. There's nothing to hinder them from remarrying at the end of six months if they like to do so. Ha, ha! Wouldn't Vere Naylor be wild? But come along; let us have a peep at the cucumbers before the shower breaks."

For a little while the Blue Parlour remained empty. By-and-by Cecil Dane lounged in, whistling in a minor key, his glass in his eye, his hands deep in his pockets, and looking anything rather than a happy man.

"I wonder whether she will follow me," he muttered. "She wouldn't have done so a month ago, but nowadays nothing surprises me. What a bundle of contradictions a woman is! There's someone coming. By Jove! I durst wager anything it's Linda."

He took a magazine off the table, and

sat down with his back to the door, but there was a large mirror opposite to him, and he had only to lift his eyes in order to see everything that was going on.

Mrs. Dane entered the room, and began at once to turn over the articles on the centre table as if in search of something.

"There he sits," she murmured under her breath. "He is not going out as I was afraid he was. Although we are no longer husband and wife, that is no reason why he should not speak to me. But he won't, and I can keep silent no longer." Then she said aloud: "Mr. Dane, do you happen to have seen the last number of Blackwood?"

"No, madam, I have not seen the last number of Blackwood."

"Pardon me, but is not that it in your hand?"

The glass dropped from Cecil's eye; for once he changed colour.

"Ah yes, by Jove! so it is. Beg pardon. Didn't know."

He rose, crossed to where Linda was standing, bowed ceremoniously, and offered her the book.

"Not unless you have quite done with it, Mr. Dane," said Linda in her most dulcet tones.

"Thank you, but I have quite done with it, Mrs. Dane-Danson."

Linda smiled her sweetest, and took the book. Then they bowed to each other; then Linda sat down and pretended to become immersed in her magazine; then Cecil went back to his former seat, stretched his long legs out, put his glass in his eye, clasped his hands behind his head, and began to contemplate the ceiling.

"What a darling he looks!" murmured Linda. "Can it be true that I have really lost him?" Her heart gave a great sigh as she asked herself the question.

"It seems impossible to realise the fact that she's no longer my wife," mused Cecil. "I can't keep away from her. I haven't smoked for two days. Bad sign, very."

To Linda this silence was intolerable.

"Mr. Dane, can you oblige me by telling me the time? My watch has stopped."

Cecil rose from his half-recumbent position, and produced his watch.

"The time, madam, is ten minutes and eighteen seconds past four."

"Ten minutes and eighteen seconds—thank you very much, Mr. Dane."

"You are quite welcome, madam."

Then after a pause Linda repeated, this time with a little more emphasis:

"I said 'Thank you very much, Mr. Dane.'"

"And I said 'You are quite welcome, madam.'"

"Oh dear! why won't he talk?" murmured Linda. "What stupid creatures men are!"

She turned over one or two leaves noisily. Cecil was contemplating the ceiling again.

How long our two young and foolish separatists would have kept on sitting without speaking to each other, and apparently ignoring each other's existence, there is no knowing, had they been allowed to do as they liked in the matter. Presently, however, Captain Marmaduke and Lilian, on their way back from visiting the cucumbers, entered the conservatory, which opened by means of an archway into the parlour. Lilian was the first to perceive Cecil and Linda.

"There they are!" she whispered to her companion. "If we could but bring them together again!"

"You know what we have agreed upon," he replied, also in a whisper. "Why not make a beginning at once?"

"But I don't know how to begin."

"Trust to your woman's wit to show you the way."

"No, no; pray don't leave me."

"Remember your promise to your guardian."

"You don't know how nervous I am."

"Mr. Dane is not at all ferocious; the first plunge is everything. Come."

With these words Marmaduke went forward from the conservatory into the parlour, and making his way to Linda, seated himself on the couch by her side. She was grateful for the interruption. Cecil should see that other people cared for her society, if he no longer did. She greeted Marmaduke with a smile, and shut the magazine she was making a pretence of reading.

"It is not often that ladies find much to interest them in Blackwood," said Marmaduke.

"Don't you know that Blackwood has often some very nice love-stories?"

"And you are fond of love-stories?"

"Show me the woman who is not."

"You have studied the philosophy of the subject?" asked Marmaduke with a smile.

"I may have skimmed the surface; nothing more."

"The traitor!" muttered Lilian when she found herself left alone in the conser-

vatory. She took off her hat, and stood for a few moments with a finger pressed to her lips, thinking. Then she went forward into the room to where an easel with a drawing-board on it stood in one corner.

"Allow me, Miss Ramsay," said Cecil, coming to her assistance. "Where shall I fix it for you?"

"Just here, please. I want to finish this group of ferns which I began the other day. I hope, Mr. Dane, that you are not a very severe critic."

"How is it possible to criticise what one doesn't understand?"

"A great many people contrive to do so."

"I am not so presumptuous as a great many people."

On a side table stood a basket of coloured wools belonging to Linda. Marmaduke took it up.

"What a charming assortment of colours you have here," he said.

"But how tiresome that they all want winding before I can make use of them."

"It takes two people to wind wools, does it not?"

"I believe so."

"Why should not you and I wind some together?"

"Why not, indeed?" She took the basket, and began to arrange some of the wools for winding, saying to herself: "I hope Cecil won't go away." Then she said aloud: "When I was married—" Then came a pause. Her heart fluttered for a moment or two; then she went on more firmly: "When I was married I never could get my husband to help me to wind my wools. He was rude enough to say that it was an occupation fit only for milk-sops and old women."

"Not every one thinks so. I have been told that it was while kneeling on one knee, and holding a skein of wool, as I am holding yours, that my grandfather first told my grandmother that he loved her. And he was no milk-sop. He died in battle, charging at the head of his regiment."

"But he probably never helped your grandmother to wind wools again. They got married, you know, and that makes all the difference." Then to herself she said: "I do hope Cecil is looking!"

Cecil was looking. "Little flirt!" he muttered. Then to Lillian he said: "How the sketch grows under your fingers. It seems almost like magic to me, who cannot draw."

"And yet it is so very simple. There goes the point of my pencil."

"Let me make you another point."

"Thanks, but the pencil is too soft, and I have no harder one by me."

There was a portfolio of drawings on a chair close by. Cecil took it up and opened it. "You have some more drawings here. May I be permitted to examine them?" Lillian smiled assent. Cecil drew his chair a little nearer to her, and began to turn over the drawings. "You must tell me what each of them is as we go along," he said.

Linda had eyes for Cecil as well as for her wools. "What can they be talking about?" she asked herself. "Who would have believed that innocent-looking young monkey was such an arrant flirt?" Then she said aloud, with a touch of impatience: "There—now this tiresome skein is all in a tangle!"

"Let me help you to unravel it."

"Life itself seems nothing but knots and tangles."

"A little patience will often work wonders."

Linda's eyes had wandered across the room again. "Their heads are nearly touching each other," she said to herself.

"By Jove! how their fingers seem to have got mixed up!" was Cecil's muttered ejaculation. Then he said aloud: "And of whom may this be the portrait?"

"It is merely a fancy sketch. I call it 'Elaine,'" was Lillian's reply.

"'Elaine?' I never heard of her." Mr. Dane was probably on more familiar terms with the Racing Calendar than with the writings of a certain great poet.

"Tennyson's Elaine, you know. 'Elaine, the fair; Elaine, the loveable Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat.'"

"It ought to have been your own portrait, Miss Ramsay." Then to himself: "Confound that fellow! Can it be possible that he has fallen in love with her?"

"I can bear this no longer!" was what Linda said to herself. Then aloud to Marmaduke: "My patience is exhausted. There must be thunder in the air." With a little pout she crammed the wools into her basket.

"These sultry afternoons are trying to one's nerves," remarked Marmaduke. There was a fan on the table; he took it up and opened it. "May I?" he asked.

Linda smiled a languid assent. He began to fan her, slowly and gently.

"Now he's fanning her. Deuced cool!" was Cecil's unspoken comment.

No one would have thought, seeing Marmaduke's impassive face, how thoroughly he was enjoying the scene. "I hope you feel a little refreshed," he said presently in his grave courteous tones.

"Very much so indeed. Thanks."

"You would find it cooler on the terrace."

"Ye—es, as you say, it would be cooler there." Then to herself: "Can I—dare I leave them together? I will, let what may come of it."

She rose and moved slowly towards the open French window, Marmaduke by her side. At the window she turned and shot one backward glance.

"To be triumphed over by a minx like that!" was the bitter thought at her heart.

"And this is where they bring Elaine's body to the king's palace after she has died of a broken heart," resumed Lilian.

"She died of a broken heart, did she?"

"So it is said."

"But that happened long ago. Perhaps they believed in such things in those days."

"Perhaps in those old times we have been speaking of the men were rather better worth dying for than they are now."

"By Jove! I think that's very likely. I know that if you take us in the bunch we are not good for much nowadays." Then he added to himself: "Gone! But why—and where?"

Linda and Marmaduke reappeared at the window. The former came quickly into the room.

"My dear Lilian, do make haste out on to the terrace," she said; "there's the most lovely rainbow. I know you would not like to miss seeing it."

Lilian rose from the low chair on which she had been sitting.

"You will excuse me, will you not?" she said to Cecil.

Cecil rose and bowed.

"I hope we shall be able to go on with our studies another time," he said as he closed and put away the portfolio.

"I hope so, too," answered Lilian, with one of her sunniest smiles.

"Do you?" muttered Linda vindictively between her teeth. Passions and feelings

were at work in her heart this afternoon such as she had never more than dimly imagined before.

"Our scheme is progressing admirably," whispered Marmaduke to Lilian at the window.

"I was never so frightened in my life," was her low reply.

Linda had lingered behind for a moment.

"I am sorry, Mr. Dane, to have been the means of depriving you of Miss Ramsay's charming society," she remarked with ironical politeness.

"For a little while—only for a little while, madam. I have not examined the whole of Miss Ramsay's drawings yet."

Linda turned on him with flashing eyes.

"Wretch!" she cried, with a passionate stamp of her foot.

Mr. Dane snapped his fingers lightly.

"Flirt!" was all that he condescended to reply.

Linda flung him a glance of withering scorn, and turning haughtily, walked slowly out of the room.

"Pleasant—very, this sort of thing," muttered Cecil, when he found himself alone. "What a fool I was to stay here after I had got my papers! And now the deuce of it is I can't bear the thought of going away. The Asylum for Imbeciles would be my proper home. I'll go and have a quiet smoke in the shrubbery and try to clear my brain. Perhaps I shall see Linda on the terrace. Confound that fellow, Marmaduke, and his insinuating ways!" Stepping out on the terrace, he looked first to the right and then to the left. "What can have become of them? Shall I go in search of them? No. That would indeed be a confession of weakness. Let them go to Jericho!"

He took out his tobacco-pouch, filled his pipe, struck a match, drew a few whiffs, then pulling his hat further over his brows, and burying his hands deeply in his pockets, he plunged moodily into the shrubbery.

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